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SUBJECT: HAITI: FEEDING HAITIANS: SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Since the first days after the earthquake in Haiti, there has been concern - and considerable confusion - regarding the need for internationally sourced seed to meet the needs of the upcoming planting season. Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Development (MARNDR) requested 1,000 MT each of bean and maize seed. FAO, as part of the U.N. Flash Appeal, requested \$23 million, in part to fund this request. Since the request, there have been questions regarding nearly every aspect of the program including the level of need, the effect on seed markets, the viability of seeds identified for purchase to thrive in the Haitian environment, and the ability to distribute seed in the Haitian market. Based on recent discussions with Minister Gue of the MARDNR and with FAO and IFAD officials, there continues to be a need for seed and FAO is proceeding with plans to purchase seed, although less than requested due to funding shortfalls. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On the margins of the IFAD Governing Council meeting in Rome, Ambassador Cousin spoke with Minister Gue of MARNDR about his request for assistance in providing seed to Haiti. Shortly after the earthquake, Minister Gue had asked for 1,000 MT of bean seed and 1,000 MT of maize seed for the coming season. According to the Minister, the request was based on a survey of needs in ten regions in Haiti. That survey found a need for an additional 1,400 MT of beans, and 2,000 MT of maize, which would benefit 42,000 and 240,000 families, respectively. The MARNDR also identified a need for 500 MT of rice (10,000 families), and 500 MT of sorghum seed (120,000 families). He also reported that of the total identified need, they already have available in Haiti 420 MT of beans, and 600 MT of maize.

¶3. (SBU) Haiti's main agricultural season is during the March - April period. Total annual bean seed needs for the year are 7,500 tons, of which 3,750 are needed during the March - April period; total maize seed needs are also 7,500 MT, with 4,500 tons needed in the March - April period. Thus, the Minister is requesting about one-quarter of the total normal need for seeds for this planting season. While it remains unclear exactly how much the seed supply in Haiti might have been affected by the earthquake, or how much was in storage prior to the earthquake, the Minister has been clear that his appeal is aimed not just at

replacing lost seed, but also at increasing production in the coming season to enhance Haiti's ability to feed itself and to provide employment for the country. In particular, he is looking to rural areas that are experiencing an influx of people as the population moves away from the devastation in Port-a-Prince. Many of Haiti's farmers use unimproved seed that gives low yields. Improved seed would provide additional seed for new populations in the countryside hoping to farm, and increase production to feed the increased population in the rural areas.

¶4. (SBU) Under the original \$575 million UN Flash Appeal launched on January 15, FAO, as the UN's Agriculture Cluster lead, requested \$23 million to rehabilitate affected agricultural families and for the purchase of emergency seed, fertilizer and other agricultural input needs. Despite a very successful response to the food, health and WASH components of the UN Flash Appeal for Haiti, very little has come to FAO (as reported by FAO, \$1.75 million total \$500,000 from its own Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) funds, \$500,000 from Belgium, \$250,000 from Brazil and \$500,000 from OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)). FAO reports that their appeal at present has only been 8% funded. FAO Deputy Director General (DDG) He has written to OCHA Emergency Relief Coordinator Sir John Holmes requesting that funds be made available as soon as possible. According to FAO, OCHA has \$70 million in unallocated funds that they are sitting on at present. IFAD also has \$1.5 million in funds remaining in country on a seed program that was

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not fully implemented last year. FAO managed this program but neither FAO nor IFAD could verify if the \$1.5 million is in cash or in seed inventory, and FAO maintains that although IFAD has made the commitment, they have not seen the funds. IFAD is also moving quickly on other funds for Haiti, but probably will not have these in place for seed purchase this season. FAO is also pursuing the possibility of using the EU Food Facility to partially fund the program.

¶5. (SBU) Despite the funding shortfall, FAO has gone forward with a tender for maize and bean seed, but for only 700 MT in total, a considerably smaller quantity than requested. With the \$1.75 million they currently have, FAO believes they can purchase about 500 MT total. However, they noted that the \$500,000 from FAO TCP funds must have the Haitian Minister of Agriculture's approval for the purpose of seed purchase. Although the original tender was for 700 MT, FAO notes they could easily expand it if funds were made available. Tenders are being conducted out of the FAO office in the Dominican Republic. The 500 MT is sufficient to reach about 25-30,000 beneficiary families, planting one-quarter hectare each.

¶6. (SBU) The first tender closed on February 8 and FAO technicians are currently evaluating the bids for compliance with the tender. FAO expects to get bean seed that has been tested in the Haitian environment from the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Costa Rica. There is some concern that if purchases are not made in the near future, seed suppliers in these countries may sell the seed to other buyers. The tender for maize was for open-pollinated varieties only so that farmers can continue to grow seed from their crops for several years, rather than have to repurchase seed next year as would be required if hybrid or GMO seeds were provided.

¶7. (SBU) There are also some other sources of seed not included in the Haiti total of available seeds, but these are relatively small. Brazil has offered 100 MT of bean seed. Negotiations on this are ongoing regarding type, delivery and

other details. Argentina and Venezuela made statements of their intentions to provide seed, but neither the Ministry or FAO has seen anything concrete. FAO maintains that IFAD has made the commitment but has not released the funds. FAO did indicate that under this program there are about 40 MT of seed remaining in strategic stocks. However, FAO would prefer to use this seed for another round of seed multiplication rather than sell the seed in the market. 60 kilograms of seed could provide about 1-1.5 tons of seed for future planting.

18. (SBU) There is little concern about distribution of the seed once it is in the country. FAO is working with WFP to get seed from the Dominican Republic to Haiti. WFP can arrange 140 trucks per day. The seed will then be transported by local transporters and NGO's working with local MARNRD offices. There are currently about 50 NGO's coming to the Agricultural Cluster meetings that can be drawn on for this work. The IFAD/FAO program worked extensively with farmer organizations and NGO's and they have an organized pipeline and lists of beneficiaries. They have primary lists of 100,000 beneficiary families, and are planning to do a second list as they get a better handle on the populations moving into the rural areas.

19. (SBU) Other seed/planting materials are also being considered. Monsanto has offered 7 MT of vegetable seeds. The technical team in the Ministry of Agriculture is evaluating this offer. FAO is also interested in purchasing sweet potatoes and bananas. These would be local (Haiti and Dominican Republic) purchases because of bulk and suitability. They are hoping to

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start a program of in vitro banana plantings from cuttings from the DR and are looking for virus-free fields where multiplication can be done for eventual home garden planting.

110. (SBU) FAO is also trying to purchase 10,000 toolkits (shovels, pick axes, wheelbarrows) to provide to each beneficiary family receiving seeds. They are looking to suppliers in the DR, Panama and the U.S. When they initially tendered for these items, Minister Gue did not want to tender in Haiti, fearing it would only fuel inflation. After better assessing the market, they will include Haitian suppliers in the second round. FAO would like to provide toolkits to 100,000 beneficiaries. Of more concern is the delivery time into Haiti. FAO reports that Dominican Republic routes are getting very clogged and wait time for sea shipments is 2-3 months. FAO is not doing tenders for fertilizer and does not intend to at this point.

111. (SBU) Comment: FAO remains convinced that seed is needed in Haiti and is pursuing the program on the expectation that they will receive additional funds. Minister Gue also continues with his request, and presents more data with each day to back up his claims. Most agree that distribution will not be a problem given the MARNDR and NGO networks. The outstanding question is on the amount of seed and the impact this could have on existing markets. FAO reports they are cooperating with Catholic Relief services in a broader seed assessment in the country, this will not be completed before this planting season.

Minister Gue argues that that now is the time to upgrade Haiti's agricultural sector, and given the loss of secondary and tertiary economic sectors, agriculture must step up to take the lead in re-establishing Haiti's economy. End Comment.

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